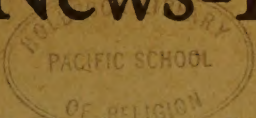


The Christian News-Letter

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Edited by
KATHLEEN BLISS



8th August, 1945

DEAR MEMBER,

The News-Letter has from its earliest days maintained that one of the most vital issues with which the nation had to deal in its internal life was the treatment of its youth. The matter is of such vital importance that it ought to be kept continually under review. Two questions are now of paramount importance. First, a generation of young people is suffering from the disturbances to their education made by the war and will not benefit by the provisions of the new Education Act. Second, there is going to be an acute shortage of juvenile labour.

WAR AND THE SCHOOLS

Teachers have made desperate and scantily acknowledged efforts to maintain educational standards in war time. Depletion of staff, destruction and commandeering of buildings have led to huge classes and drastic restriction of activities. In large cities this situation is serious, and returning evacuees have further added to overcrowding. Magistrates in junior courts report that a substantial proportion of young offenders are children who after five years of successful evacuation in the country find city streets an inadequate playground; others coming before them have dodged the school attendance officer for five years. Industrial managers say that many children come to work scarcely able to read. The raising of the school-leaving age has been postponed and the building of new schools and county colleges is likely to be somewhat delayed by urgent housing needs.

In order to make good the lack of schooling an increasing number of factories are starting their own educational schemes, partly technical and partly general. These factory schools are only possible in larger units, and a considerable proportion of juveniles go into the retail trade by ones and twos. But factory schools are an important attempt to make good our war-time losses. They ought to be subject to educational scrutiny, and no doubt many who are responsible for them would welcome the help of educationalists in a difficult undertaking.

THE SCARCITY OF JUVENILES

Meanwhile necessity is leading employers to expect not less but more from the schools. The falling birthrate of the '20s is taking effect and the number of young people coming into the labour market is falling. "Hitherto," says a writer in a well-known industrial magazine, "industry has never been faced with a shortage of labour . . . What will be the right policy for industry during the next fifteen or twenty years? Clearly, to use to better purpose the available supply of juvenile labour. It is hoped that when educational reforms begin to take effect industry will receive a stream of better developed children as its potential man-power." Managers are looking to the schools to provide them with young recruits who are not only better equipped to profit by technical training but who, by being more articulate and better able to understand larger industrial issues, will be able to play their part intelligently in effective co-operation between workers and management.

The Central Advisory Council on Education set up under the new Act is already discussing the question how the schools may better serve the needs of industry, and will make recommendations on the reform of school curricula. The needs of industry are not a final educational criterion. Changes in the curriculum made on the sole ground that industry demands them would have to be very carefully examined. But from the educational point of view further changes of school curricula for those over twelve years old need to be considered. The education of children is vastly wider than their schooling. They learn all the time from press, radio, cinema, church, club, home, street corner and in a dozen other ways. The success of totalitarian propaganda in using these non-school media of education has opened our eyes to their power. Children assimilate and remember what they think is worth while. They learn readily if they think that what they are doing belongs to the world of "work," which is to them the real world. Work, in short, is or can be a very powerful educational factor. Some senior schools have taken in work from factories which has demanded skill and has provided an introduction to technical processes. The experience of the government training schools under the Ministry of Labour is of very great significance. The school is in all outward appearances a factory. Desks are replaced by engineer's benches, lathes and welding apparatus. Boys and girls who have left school at fourteen come to this training school and begin by working with their hands, filing and measuring metal, and as they proceed from one operation to another they gather round a blackboard in the corner of the workshop for an hour to learn from a craftsman brought from a factory, mathematics and physics of a degree of difficulty

which they would be completely unable to master at school, where their learning is not the obvious key to mastery of skills with their hands which they are eager to acquire. "My difficulty," said the director of one of these institutions, "is that I can't find practical craftsmen who know how to use blackboard and chalk. Nor can I find a schoolmaster who, with his superior techniques of explanation, has this practical experience and workman's approach which these children respect."

What will be the effect on the lives and characters of young people of a competition between employers for their services? The first registration of all sixteen-year-olds revealed on a wide scale an evil which was known to investigators before the war. Children left school, took a job, disliked it or grew tired of it, and took another and another and yet another. By the time they were sixteen many had had several dozen jobs and had no trade or skill or any prospect of obtaining them. During the war the Restriction on Engagement Order has prevented young people from entering certain trades except through a Labour Exchange. The Essential Work Order has prevented them from changing their jobs except through a Labour Exchange. This has been hard on some, keeping them at jobs they disliked; but at least it has prevented this damaging flitting from job to job.

Only one-third of the children who leave school at fourteen (85 per cent of all school-leavers in any one year) get their first jobs through Juvenile Employment Exchanges, which work in consultation with the schools. Finding a job is still one of the treasured prerogatives of the home. Some parents can do very well by their children in this matter, but the number of jobs in which a father can take his son in beside himself and teach him not only his skill but the all-important moral values which went with his trade, is now very small. The majority of parents do not possess the knowledge of the field to make a wise choice. The temptation of a high wage to a poor family is often overwhelming.

An inter-departmental committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Godfrey Ince, consisting of educationalists, industrialists and Ministry of Labour officials is at present discussing juvenile employment. Its recommendations, when they appear, should be most carefully weighed by those who care about the welfare of young people. Anyone who teaches in a Sunday School or works in a youth club knows the complete and often most disconcerting change which comes over many children when they go to work. In a few weeks they are changed and hardened. If work exercises so powerful an influence on lives and characters, then it must be examined and its conditions mastered and used for right purposes.

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT

The excitement of the election results pouring in on July 26th equalled that of some of the high points of tension during the war. The results, designed or undesigned, of the British people's decision in 1945 may be as important for the world as its decision to continue the seemingly hopeless struggle in 1940.

Desire for a change and the drift to the Left which has been widespread over the Continent have no doubt contributed to the result. But the smallness of the Communist vote (in spite of good publicity and widespread admiration of Russia), and the complete collapse of *Commonwealth*, indicate that it was a vote for the Labour Party, its leaders and policy. This is a choice with its roots in the British tradition. It is not an indication that we have gone continental or Russian. It is a choice within the British tradition.

Viewed from the international standpoint, two aspects of the change are outstanding. First, the most striking imaginable demonstration has been given to the world of the power of a free democracy, in contrast with a totalitarian or one-party State, to change its Government, even when the existing Government has as its leader one to whom the nation is conscious of owing an irrepayable debt and who enjoyed in a unique degree its confidence throughout the war years.

Secondly, it is reported that the Russian press has reacted to the results of the election with considerable reserve. It may well be that the Russians are in considerable uncertainty about the effect on the minds of the working-classes throughout Europe of the access to power in Great Britain of a brand of socialism different from their own and rooted in the British liberal democratic tradition.

THE REV. H. G. M. CLARKE

Michael Clarke came to us from Repton eighteen months ago to help the Christian Frontier in the difficult period after F. C. Maxwell's death. He feels strongly drawn towards an attempt to work out the ideas that have been taking shape in his mind in a local situation and has accepted the appointment as Rector of Holy Trinity, St. Marylebone, a parish in the heart of London. He will happily be near enough to remain in touch with us, and we are very grateful to him for the help he has given us.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

P.S.—To enable the Editor to take a holiday, Dr. Oldham will be responsible for the next two numbers of the News-Letter.

THE FATE OF EUROPE

MY DEAR KATHLEEN,

You have asked me to write about Europe. These notes are hurried jottings made after a second visit to Europe since the spring. Unhappily my work is so arranged at the moment that there is far too little time for proper reflection on the raw material presented by reading, talking and travelling.

In the last few months I have been to France and Belgium, with a brief visit to Holland and an even briefer journey into Germany. All these countries belong, as we ourselves belong, to a specific cultural entity, a community formed by western civilization. This civilization has been for over a thousand years the dominant element in world history, and in it the highest expressions of human activity have so far been achieved. Yet the question is whether this community can recover from the attacks that have deeply and savagely stricken Europe. All that the war has decided is that National Socialism shall not completely blot out western civilization. But Nazism grew up inside this civilization and therefore is a symptom of a deeper disease. The operation of removing this cancer may have been final and successful, but all one can say after these first months of victory is that it is difficult to believe that the operation will restore the patient's health.

Materially, politically, spiritually, Europe to-day is a centre of confusion and contradiction. Material destruction has not gone as far in France, the Low Countries or Italy as might have been feared. Holland in particular escaped almost complete destruction by a matter of days. In Germany, on the other hand, destruction has been wrought on a scale at which the mind boggles. The great cities are now vast ruins, covering the dead. The destruction of wealth has gone on everywhere. One cannot devote resources to total war for six years without the most decisive fall in the people's standards of living. Since among the poorest there is almost no margin, a fallen standard of living means near starvation. Disruption of transport, lack of raw materials, above all the coal crisis have led to widespread unemployment, malnutrition and general misery. Idleness increases the sense of frustration and futility, which is felt all the more keenly in contrast to the earlier Utopian hopes of liberation.

I cannot in a few sentences sum up the terrible feeling of tension and desolation and even hopelessness which one meets in liberated countries. One feels a sort of spiritual vacuum. Behind it all is lurking the fear of slaughter, violence and appalling cruelty. I do not mean that we shall see a repetition of Buchenwald and Belsen, but I do mean that Nazi horrors have removed certain psychological

restraints, and people now contemplate torture and mass execution in quite a different way than they did, say ten to fifteen years ago. There is a hardening and brutalising of people's minds. One example is the continuance in certain circles of anti-Semitism, and the astonishing speed with which the massacre of over three million Jews has either been dismissed from people's minds or genuinely forgotten. I do not want to be defeatist, but I cannot honestly say that visits to Europe at the moment are very encouraging. European civilization is for the moment moribund, and many people are wondering whether it has the people, organization and energy inside itself to begin its gigantic task of rebuilding itself as a coherent society.

Yet it would be impossible to leave a vacuum in Europe. There are two principles of political, social and economic organization which will penetrate Europe if it remains in this inert state. The trouble is that either alternative may well complete the destruction of Europe which Hitler had already nearly accomplished.

The first principle is the Russian principle. Certain of its concepts are rational and some of its achievements impressive. It is my own firm conviction that the idea of economic planning of a single wide area and single range of resources is essential to the rebuilding of Europe. I think too that the relative absence of racialism in Russia might spare Europe some of its endless friction. In every other way the Russian system—in which a tradition of Byzantine autocracy has been wedded to a sort of managerial revolution with State bureaucracy and a ubiquitous secret police—cannot be held to be anything but a total denial of the human and liberal tradition which is the crown of Europe.

The other principle of organization is the American principle. It manifests the virtues of *laissez faire* politics and carries within it some part of the inheritance of freedom and constitutionalism from its Founding Fathers. But economically it is a profoundly unstable system, in spite of its brilliant technical achievements. It has not mastered the trade cycle. It is liable to shattering crises of unemployment. Many of its industrial leaders already seem to look upon Europe as an area for colonial exploitation or a dumping ground for exports. Above all, it has in no way solved the spiritual crisis of capitalism—that of healing the breach between employers and employed, and of giving an acceptable social sanction to the wielders of economic power.

One does not have to stay long in Europe to see that people feel a growing terror of being divided between these two systems and becoming their battle ground. Such a development would complete the destruction of Europe, and no one can doubt that if the vacuum in Europe persists some such conflict will be inevitable. After being the fount of civilization for a thousand years, Europe

will become a no-man's-land between two rival but equally pagan conceptions of life.

The only way out is the recovery of Europe itself by a genuine synthesis between the Russian and American extremes. Some people see this alternative in terms of a return to the past. They argue that both the Russian and American systems come from the secular movements in Europe—from the Enlightenment and the Revolution of 1789, and from the Industrial Revolution. These are the ideas and movements, they argue, that have betrayed Europe, and Europe will recover only by regaining its historical past. The medievalists, the unconscious feudalists, the "reactionaries"—in the proper and technical sense of the term—wish to renounce post-Reformation Europe. For Christians, and particularly for Catholics, this possibility is an obvious temptation. It provided some of the honest support that was given to Pétain, and it is a vital trend in Spain. It occurs too in Conservative circles everywhere—in the hankering for simpler ways of life, for the return of the aristocratic principle, the restoration of status, the cult of honour.

I do not myself think that there is any way out here. The salvation of Europe can never lie in defeatism and in the renunciation of reality. Several times in human history, the attempt to plunge back into the past has led to ossification and collapse. In any case an attempt to recreate a vanished world could not counter aggressive Russian and American ideas.

No. To my mind the only solution lies in an attempt to recreate the tradition of western civilization by absorbing into it all that has been good in the last 600 years, and by expressing in terms suitable for a scientific and technical civilization the eternal values which were formerly expressed in the old feudal agrarian world. There are two sides to this attempted synthesis. One is in the political and economic field, and lies in the achievement of an organization in which the necessary direction and intervention of the State in economic life is reconciled to freedom and spontaneity in political and social life. The other task—which may well be a precondition of success on the political and economic field—is the achievement of a new religious synthesis.

On the political and economic level it is obvious that Great Britain has an enormous part to play. It is in England that political freedom and the supremacy of society over the State have been best preserved. It is in England that the first attempts are being made to work out the compromise between complete socialism and complete *laissez faire*. The empiricism and the tolerance of the British people, and their political maturity, give them an opportunity and therefore a responsibility such as rests on no other country.

The more fundamental problem—the new religious approach—is the responsibility of the whole Christian community, and to me

it seems two-fold. There is an intellectual problem which resembles the task faced by St. Paul when he confronted the Greek philosophy with Hebrew religion, or St. Thomas Aquinas when he reconciled classical learning with scholastic philosophy. Our task of assimilation to-day is far more difficult, for so much of the thinking has been directly destructive of the religious view of life. This view can, I think, be best summed up in the words of a recent advertisement for a new magazine "*which will assume that separately during the last fifty years there have been four revolutionary developments which are significant for the future of human thought and behaviour. (1) The discovery of the unconscious by Freud. (2) The tendency of philosophy, as a subject, to develop into a science of verbal meaning (sematic symbolism, logical positivism). (3) The trend in the arts away from representation towards expression and construction. (4) The evolution of Marxism as the faith of tens of millions in Europe and Asia.*"

The intellectual task of sorting out truth and error in these developments and restoring the truth to the Christian tradition is a colossal one. I know of only two places where such an attempt is being made—in the writing of Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, and in the left-wing Catholic circles in France, where the Dominican Fathers are doing remarkable work. Secular writers such as Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard have an inkling of the need, and one of the most remarkable contributions that I have read recently is the last essay in Arthur Koestler's *The Yogi and the Commissar*, in which he links together scientific discovery and thought with an attempt to recover ethical values.

The other task for the Christian world is not of the same order but is definitely more important. It is the way of sanctity. In our modern sceptical, materialistic world, the people can again be made to believe in God only, I think, if they meet men and women who are, in the old Russian term, "God-bearers." The irruption of the divine into human life is the only final proof of God, and through it only will be restored belief in religion and the primacy of spiritual values. It is the only final answer to Belsen and Buchenwald. When European man has fallen as low as the German butchers, how can the balance be redressed without an outpouring of sanctity and the appearance of men who are as near the angels as Himmler and Kramer were near the beasts?

Yours ever, BARBARA WARD

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